United Nations A/73/PV.20

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-third session

20th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 16 October 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 125 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Draft resolution (A/73/L.5)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/73/L.5.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt): Since its inception, the Group of 77 (G-77) and China has been championing multilateralism and global solidarity, as they are among the key means for fostering cooperative and harmonious relations towards the achievement of equity, equality and prosperity for all. On that basis, we have strived to promote the collective economic interests of developing countries and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic and development issues within the United Nations system, and we have effectively contributed to international cooperation on those issues, of which there are many.

As we have stressed before, the legacy of the Group of 77 and China is inextricable from that of the United Nations. It would be no exaggeration to state and remind ourselves that so much of what the United Nations has achieved in the past half-century in the development sphere has been in one way or another inspired, founded, shaped and supported towards fruition through the Group of 77 and China.

On 27 September, the Group of 77 and China elected the State of Palestine as Chair of the Group for the year 2019, following the endorsement by the Group of Asia-Pacific States of its candidature in November 2017. While the State of Palestine has been a full-fledged member of the Group of 77 and China since January 1976, Palestine remains a non-member observer State of the United Nations. Therefore, the rights and privileges enjoyed by the State of Palestine vary from one United Nations organ to another, based Organizationn the respective rules of procedure, the resolutions adopted by those organs and their established practices.

In that context, following consultations with the Secretariat, it has been assessed that a General Assembly resolution would be required to avail the State of Palestine with the rights and capacity required to be able to perform the functions and usual practices undertaken by the Chair of the G-77 and China in the General Assembly, other orgars, entities and certain conferences for the duration of its chairmanship of the G-77 and China in the year 2019, thereby enabling its effective chairmanship and the continuity of the positive role played by the Group within the United Nations system.

The Group of 77 and China therefore introduces today draft resolution A/73/L.5, entitled "Chair of the Group of 77 for 2019". The rights I mentioned are enumerated in the annex of that document. The adoption of this draft resolution, which we consider to be technical and procedural in nature, will enable the next Chair of the Group to effectively fulfil its duties and responsibilities to the Group and the wider membership during the year 2019, without prejudice to the existing

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rights and privileges of the State of Palestine as per the relevant resolutions.

On behalf of the G-77 and China, I invite all Member States to positively consider the draft resolution now before them, taking into consideration its technical nature but also its importance to the work of the Group, and also noting that Egypt, in its capacity as Chair of the Group, and the State of Palestine were engaged in the process in full transparency within the Group and the wider membership, with a view to enabling a smooth transition and the continued efficacy of the Group's work in the coming year.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now consider draft resolution A/73/L.5.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): For decades, the United States has been committed to achieving a comprehensive end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Only through direct negotiations between the parties can the Israelis and the Palestinians achieve the peace that they both deserve, which remains our goal today. We cannot support the efforts of the Palestinians to enhance their status outside of direct negotiations. The United States does not recognize that there is a Palestinian State and notes that no such State has been admitted as a State Member of the United Nations. We therefore strongly oppose the election of Palestine as Chair of the Group of 77 (G-77), as well as the so-called enabling draft resolution (A/73/L.5).

If that misguided draft resolution is adopted, the United States will leave no doubt about where it stands. When the Palestinians speak as Chair of the G-77 in the General Assembly, we will remind our fellow Member States that the United States does not recognize that there is a Palestinian State and that no such State has been admitted as a State Member of the United Nations. Only States Members of the United Nations should be entitled to speak and act on behalf of major groups of States — such as the Group of 77 and China — at the United Nations.

It is entirely inappropriate for an observer State to play the role of representing a group of States in the General Assembly or elsewhere in the United Nations system. The United States has long opposed the enhancements of the Palestinian status at the United Nations. We voted against resolution 67/19, designating the Palestinian delegation as a non-member observer State. We have consistently and formally objected to Palestinian accession to treaties to which we are party. That is because, as I have already said, the United States does not recognize that there is a Palestinian State and we do not consider ourselves to be in a treaty relationship with the "State of Palestine".

Achieving real peace requires the courage to sit down at the table and make compromises. This initiative does the opposite of that. We therefore ask that all delegations vote against this draft resolution. We also urge Palestinian leaders to do the right thing for their people and re-engage in peace talks. When they are ready, rest assured that the United States will be ready too.

Mrs. Furman (Israel): The Group of 77 (G-77) is an important player in the development work here at the United Nations. It handles issues that are of the utmost importance to us all, especially now as the United Nations and Member States engage in development reform. It should be a matter of concern for everyone if the Group is exploited for non-development issues and is used to advance the political interests of one delegation. The draft resolution before us (A/73/L.5), as drafted, makes it clear that that is indeed the case. Despite the claim that this is a G-77 draft resolution that is technical in nature, it was drafted by the Palestinian delegation and goes beyond what is necessary for the Chair to execute its functions on behalf of the Group. Unfortunately, that pattern of manipulative behaviour is not new.

The established rules of procedure of the United Nations are important and set the framework in which we conduct our business. Constant attempts to change the rules of procedure to accommodate one observer delegation in a manner that would not be tolerated for any Member State only weakens this institution. How ironic is it that this draft resolution is being considered under the agenda item entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system", when it clearly weakens and undermines the United Nations? We will therefore vote against the draft resolution. Looking towards 2019, we sincerely hope that the same professional manner in which the current Chair handled the coordination and deliberations of the G-77 will be maintained and that the Group will not be used cynically to score political points.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/73/L.5, entitled "Chair of the Group of 77 for 2019".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Honduras, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Monaco, Poland, Slovakia, Tuvalu

Draft resolution A/73/L.5 was adopted by 146 votes to 3, with 15 abstentions (resolution 73/5).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Seychelles informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): Germany voted in favour of resolution 73/5 in order to enable the Palestinian Chair of the Group of 77 to carry out its responsibilities on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We welcome the fact that the resolution limits additional rights and privileges to the duration of the Palestinian Chair's role in 2019 and to functions required to carry out that role. With reference to our explanation of vote on resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations" of 29 November 2012 (see A/67/PV.44), our vote today should not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine. It should also not be construed as a statement on its status in the United Nations. We look forward to working closely with a Palestinian Chair of the Group of 77 in 2019.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands voted in favour of resolution 73/5, on the Palestinian leadership of the Group of 77, in order to enable the Palestinian delegation to carry out its responsibilities as Chair of the Group of 77. We welcome the fact that the resolution is limited in time to the duration of the Palestinian leadership of the Group of 77 and limited in scope to only the functions necessary to carry out that role. With reference to our statement of 29 November 2012 (see A/67/PV.44) in respect to resolution 67/19, our vote should not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We look forward to cooperating with the Group of 77 and its chairmanship in an open and constructive way and in the spirit of this resolution.

Mr. Bird (Australia): Australia's decision to vote against resolution 73/5 reflects its long-standing position

that Palestinian attempts to seek recognition as a State in international forums are deeply unhelpful to efforts towards a two-State solution. Unilateral recognition of Palestinian statehood will not resolve outstanding issues or create the conditions for enduring stability. That will be realized only from a directly negotiated agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Australia remains firmly committed to a two-State solution that allows Israel and a future Palestinian State to exist side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders. We urge all parties to take the courageous decisions needed to return to, and make progress in, negotiations. It is critical that no party seek to exploit the outcome of today's voting in ways that could further undermine prospects for a just and lasting settlement.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the fact that resolution 73/5 is limited in time to the duration of the Palestinian leadership of the Group of 77 (G-77) and limited in scope to the functions necessary to carry out that role. For those reasons, we voted in favour. Our vote today is to enable the effective Palestinian chairmanship of the G-77 and should not be misconstrued as recognition of a Palestinian State. We reserve the right to recognize a Palestinian State bilaterally at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. Ultimately, the only way to give the Palestinian people the State that they need and deserve and give the Israeli people the security and peace to which they are entitled is through a negotiated two-State solution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, allow us to express our appreciation to all those who voted in favour of resolution 73/5. There were 146 votes in favour and three against. The voting today represents multilateralism at its best, with the broader membership supporting a resolution to enable the elected Chair of a group to perform its duties effectively. It is an expression of respect for the decision of the Group of 77 and China to elect the State of Palestine as its Chair for the year 2019 by acclamation, following the consensus endorsement by the Group of Asia-Pacific States of the State of Palestine's candidature.

The State of Palestine will spare no effort to prove itself worthy of that trust in its capacity to represent and defend the interests of the Group of 77 and China, while also engaging constructively and in an inclusive and transparent manner with all partners in order to advance cooperation and mutually beneficial agreements, for the common good of humankind.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker on this item.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 125.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.